

EDITORIAL

This issue marks a new beginning for *ALT-J*; it is the first with our new publishers, Taylor & Francis, under their Carfax imprint. Re-launching a journal is, we have found, an interesting process. Like moving house or changing jobs, it manages to blend logistical complications with a rare opportunity to pause, reflect and take stock. It isn't often that we have the chance to re-assess what is important to us, so as editors we grasped this particular challenge with glee.

One thing we all valued was the belief that *ALT-J* should be a leading international focus for the study of learning technology. Achieving this means reaching a wider audience and publishing thoughtful, scholarly research from across the world. We believe that this first issue is an important step towards this, but recognise that our commitment to this principle is something that will need to be attended to on an ongoing basis.

What we agreed that we could not do is to simply print articles that report 'what works'. To do so would be naïve and would maintain the current position of fragmentation within the field. Whilst we expect that empirical studies will continue to form the core of our articles, we believe that it is also important to understand why such findings arise and what people should do about them. This means paying attention to theory (understood broadly to including personal beliefs as well as formally recognised theoretical positions) and values (without which we cannot decide what is 'good' practice and what might merely be more efficient) as well as outcomes.

The articles in this issue represent a useful illustration of these principles. Alongside studies of the reuse of learning objects (by Currier *et al*) we have recommendations for social re-engineering (provided by Koper *et al*) to facilitate this process. These articles also consider the impact of such contextual changes, with Peruski and Mishra looking at the impact of introducing new technology on staff roles in higher education and Seale considering the ways in which legal constraints and our espoused values ought to influence our practice. Moving from implications to meaning, Berglund outlines an approach to studying the use of learning technology (illustrating this in the context of group activities within an online course) and Jones debates the question of whether the metaphor of 'networks' is helpful in understanding learning technology. Both of these articles are generative, opening up opportunities for new research that will allow these ideas to be explored in the context of particular studies.

We are also committed to the belief that our understanding of this field should remain open, rather than allowing any single position to dominate and stifle discussion. We felt it was important to keep our discussion section for this very reason, to illustrate how different perspectives can help strengthen and deepen our understanding of the field. This issue sees Gunn and Dempster exploring ideas raised by

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Dempster and her colleagues concerning the challenges of using portals to support or create communities of practice. It is our hope that illustrating such exchanges will encourage readers to approach articles in an open, questioning way.

This is the vision we hoped to capture with this first, re-launched issue. Welcome to *ALT-J*.

Martin Oliver, *Deputy Editor*
Grainne Conole, *Editor* and Jane Seale, *Deputy Editor*